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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 000725

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [IR](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: IRANIAN PRESIDENT AHMADINEJAD FULL OF BRAVADO AT  
ECO SUMMIT

REF: BAKU 704

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Jason P. Hyland per 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Azerbaijan's Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Novruz Mammadov told A/DCM that Iranian President Ahmadinejad was full of bravado at the May 5 Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit in Baku (ref). In informal conversations with other regional leaders before the ECO meeting, Ahmadinejad boasted that Iran's nuclear policies were on the right track. "We have them where we want them," Mammadov reported that Ahmadinejad said of the Europeans and the U.S. According to Mammadov, Ahmadinejad also dismissed the potential impact of sanctions against Iran as well as the possibility of military strikes against Iran. "If we are attacked, we will strike back," Ahmadinejad reportedly told the ECO heads of state while waiting to begin the May 5 meeting. Mammadov commented that while standing around and chatting with regional counterparts, Ahmadinejad used exactly the same tone and blustery rhetoric that he employs in formal speaking events. In the formal ECO meeting, however, Ahmadinejad did not address Iran's ongoing conflict with the international community over its nuclear programs.

¶2. (C) Mammadov told A/DCM May 17 that Iran's nuclear programs and the international community's possible response to the programs were raised in bilateral meetings and side discussions at the ECO Summit. Both Afghanistan's President Karzai and Pakistani Prime Minister Shuakat Aziz expressed concern to Azerbaijani President Aliyev over the possibility of a military strike on Iran. Mammadov said that they feared such a strike would have disastrous repercussions in the Muslim world, further souring popular perceptions of the West. Mammadov said President Aliyev shares these concerns.

¶3. (C) Contrary to speculation in the local press, Mammadov said that during Ahmadinejad's bilateral meeting with President Aliyev, Ahmadinejad did not bring up Aliyev's recent trip to Washington or the more general question of U.S.-Azerbaijani relations. Mammadov cautioned, however, that he did not know what was said in the two Presidents' five-minute tete-a-tete meeting. (The local press has been rife with speculation that Iran would use the April 19-20 visit of its Defense Minister and Ahmadinejad's May 3 trip to Baku -- book-ended around Aliyev's April 25-28 visit to Washington -- to pressure Azerbaijan on its close ties to the U.S.) Mammadov also refuted press reports that Ahmadinejad would be invited back to Baku for a bilateral visit in July, stating that Azerbaijan had no plans to invite him for an official visit "at this time."

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